

Guidance on messaging for civil society in context of local protests against people seeking asylum and refugees

Don't repeat or amplify fear based narratives and dog whistles. They are designed to stoke fear and dehumanise people and every time we repeat them in an effort to refute terrible things been said, we are actually helping the other side ie *#IrelandIsNotFull*, *it's not true that refugees are flooding this area*, *'refugees are not taking our homes'* *'they are not dangerous'* *'there is nothing to fear from them'* etc.

This also extends to sharing screenshots, and content online drawing attention to what is happening and to express your opposition. You might think it's helpful to share information, but in reality you are giving more oxygen to the other side. The silent majority in our communities, who are afraid to speak or who are drowned out need to be held up - focusing everything on the negative minority voices makes it very hard for them to be visible.

Avoid mythbusting; it will only enforce our opponents' frames. A classic trick of opposing voices is to draw us into arguments about **numbers** All this does is force you to discuss the issue on their terms, is dehumanising, negating and shifts the discussion away from talking about what the community is for and amplifying the positive values.

Avoid saying 'the far-right', or calling community protests racist. Our opposition uses racism to exploit fear, division, and reaction at every level of society. A very effective strategy used by the far right and right wing politicians is to exploit anxieties in order to turn people against each other. It goes against our instincts but when we talk about racism without naming specifically the effect or the behaviours ie the spread of hate, fear, division, the listener/reader/community has to fill in the gaps ie what you mean.

Most people do not have a definition of racism, i.e. prejudice plus power. Hearing spokespeople talk about racism without saying what it actually results in the audience feeling like you are talking about them, i.e. that they themselves are racist, or leave them confused or apply popular understandings ie that its about bias or difference. This does not mean that we shy away from naming what is happening, calling out racism/racial coding and dog whistles - just don't fall into the trap of thinking everyone is like you!

Be clear who you are talking to/about and be careful that in the process of trying to prove a point, that you are not either 'othering' people who are experiencing the harm but alienating people who are looking for help in understanding what's going on.

Do acknowledge that there are people spreading lies and fear [racism] in our communities, and are using the fact that we need better services, safe homes, and decent work - to turn us against each other and to fuel hate.

Communities often feel left in the dark, and are hurting for many reasons - often as a result of systemic under-resourcing. So when there's a significant moment in a community it can serve as a lightning rod for channelling unrest. From there it can quickly become weaponized by the far right and some politicians.

Equally we need to be very careful of the danger of framing communities as deficient in some way in trying to 'explain' what is happening. Getting into arguments re the 'far right' naturally evokes the so called 'far left' framing, something to avoid at all costs.

Talk about communities needing to be resourced rather getting into 'communities should be consulted' framing. Keep speaking to material needs and what's needed to enable communities to thrive - rather than getting into supporting the claim that communities should be given the power to veto particular demographics of refugees and people seeking asylum.

Do affirm positive and solidarity based values. All the research shows that by spotlighting and reinforcing solidarity based values directly impacts on how people understand and respond. There's been tons of [research](#) showing that the best framing is to open with shared values [*what we stand for/unity*] then name the problem [*some trying to divide us and how they are doing it*] and move quickly to solutions [*what we want this gov/leaders to do*]

"In this community, we pride ourselves on being welcoming and how quickly we make friends with newcomers, but some people want to divide us using fear about where we come from or the colour of our skin. Why? Because they've got nothing else to offer."

Whether we were born in Ireland, or came here seeking safety, we all just want to be safe and to live a decent life. That's why we need to fight together for homes we can all afford and decent jobs so we can care for our families. We need to fight for sports clubs, better bus services, health care, more youth clubs and all the things we need to build strong, diverse communities of equals. This community pulls together."

Use 'people first' language ie people seeking asylum, people from Ukraine rather than Ukrainians or asylum seekers. The more we use people-first language, the less dehumanised people are.

Repeat, repeat, repeat. Our job as community leaders is to make popular what needs to be said, not say what's popular. This means we have to repeat (until we are blue in the face) the narratives and messaging that we want to shape how our communities respond.

The messenger is important. When people who are trusted and held in high esteem in our communities speak, people listen. Their word carries further and gets outside the echo chambers we often get caught in ie talking to ourselves! Find out who the sports people, church leaders, politicians, cultural leaders are and talk to them about spreading the narratives that unite and show that together we are stronger than fear.

Recommended reading <https://www.wemakethefuture.us/history-of-the-race-class-narrative>

This is a working document and is being updated as we learn more about what helps or hinders.

The Far Right Observatory is a national civil society organisation that works with community groups, advocacy groups, trade unions, activists and academics to stop hate organising in our communities and workplaces. We support communities and civil society to stay grounded, caring and resilient in the face of far right hate, bigotry and extremism.